XVIII.

A LETTER TO THE Observator, FROM WILLIAM SMYTHIES Curate of St. *Gyles Cripple-Gate*, in his own *Vindication*.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

SIR;

I Did not intend to give you or my self any further trouble, but in regard 'tis possible some few Persons may believe what you have said against me, I have resolv'd to publish this in my own *Vindication* from your *False Aspersion*. I have heard of some Boys who have been several times soundly bang'd in Coffee-Houses and other Places, for reproaching the Innocent. But you have only discompos'd me, by putting me into a fit of Mirth. I hope you will excuse me that I am Immethodical, because you are pleas'd to be so your self. The first *Question* I ask'd, was about a *Popish Trimmer*, (I leave the Repetition of it

to you) and I perceive it will be the last that you intend to take notice of; and when the *Answer* comes, I fear it will be so very *thin*, that the People will easily see through it.

I will begin with that which I find in your last Paper, your upbraiding me for my *Rusty Cloathes*. My Wife presents her Service, and Thanks to you, and desires you to harp upon that String every Week, till I put my self into a *better Garb*. I perceive you have all manner of wayes of doing me Mischief; I must now be forc'd to buy new Cloathes to avoid the Aspersion of the *Observator*. But I wonder why you tell me of *a short Coat*; there is a little touch of the Observator in that, for my Clothes are as long, though not so rich as other Ministers: You tell me in the same breath, that *I go up and down begging, and making* Unaccountable Collections. I confess, *Sir*, that I have been a great Beggar, and I hope I have help'd many that are necessitous by it, but I know not what you mean by your *unaccountable Collections*. If another had told me of it, I should have thought my self accus'd of being one of the Beggars for the Observator. You may thank good Friends that your Cloathes are not *Rusty* as well as mine.

You say in Answer to my fourth *Qu.* that a Bishop can lay no hold of *Hints* and *Innuendo's* against the Government, and therefore it is in vain to complain to them, &c. However, Sir, methinks before you expose them, by naming their *Texts* and *Sermons*; you might acquaint their Lordships, that there are such *dangerous Preachers*, that they may take notice of them, and give them *Private Admonitions*, where they cannot fix *Legal Censures*: and I dare say, that in this *Diocese* the Clergy have such an extraordinary Honour and Reverence for their *Diocesan*, that a few words from him would prevent the occasion of that dreadful Mischief to the Government which you foresee. You might likewise desire their Lordships to require their Clergy to forbear Preaching upon [*Loveing one another, and bearing one anothers Burdens*] because it is (you say) *the Common Topick of Trimmers*. Or you may desire that the Ministers who have the great Congregations in *London* may be oblig'd to *Preach* no *Sermons* till they have first shew'd their *Notes*, and pass'd the *Approbation* of the Observator. You do (now I think on't) in the same Paragraph say, that you should be a *pretty Puppy* if you should go to the Bishop and complain

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plain that the Curate had slander'd you, by saying that you *had not vindicated your Reputation from certain foul Misdemeanours.* You are a very *prudent Gentleman* in not *complaining*; for that were the way for his Lordship to command the *Curate* to discover what *Reasons* he had to say so, and in that case there might possibly be *Evidence produc'd* (besides *other things*, which make you unfit to meddle with *Matters* of *Religion*) of somewhat which shew'd you were very *wanton* when you were a great deal too Old to be call'd a Puppy.

Your Harangue of the Mischiefs that have been done formerly from *Pulpits* I meddle not with, because I am nothing concern'd in that Accusation: Whoever looks into the Church where I may most properly call the Congregation *my own*, shall find that harmonious *Church-of-England Devotion*, which is very rare in this divided Age; and whosoever sees the great numbers of devout *Communicants*, will say, That if the Preacher had *Hints* and *Innuendo's*, &c. they were of very good consequence, to be the occasion of such Conformity.

But Sir, that which I am most concern'd at, and which only occasions the blotting of this Paper, is the new notorious Crimes that I am charg'd with, Viz. That I am a *Lyar*, a *Slanderer*, an Incourager of *Sedition*, &c. And if I should hold my peace, it may be (which is worse than all these, and comprehensive of them) I shall at length be call'd an Disturbator.

First, You charge me of being a most notorious Lyar. To which I answer, that I am not afraid in that point to vye Reputations with the OBSERVATOR himself; or as some would have it, that have seen your last Papers, it may be put to the Vote of very sober conformable Persons, whether one speaks most Truth, or the other Falshood. Methinks you should have consulted your *Politiques* a little better, and if I be so great a Lyar, you should have forborn reproaching me, in hopes that you might have made use of me; for I perceive you have so great occasion for such kind of Persons, that your Trade would utterly decay without them. You say That Nature hath put into my Tongue a false Brass. If that be true, 'tis great pity but we should be Friends, that my Tongue and your Pen might not disagree. But to come close to the business in hand; You say, *That the worthy D. of N. did not desire me to supply his absence*; and you assert it so positively, that

I believe some think the D. hath sent you word to that purpose. I positively affirm that he did desire it, and that it was in the House of one of his Relations in *Chancery-Lane*, another Doctor of Divinity being then present. It shall be left to the determination of the D. at his return, whether the Observator or the *Curate* hath the false Brass. I have been since informed, that he intended only to keep me in reserve, because he knew that I could not serve him, unless I preacht thrice that Day: or 'tis probable that he did not intend it, unless it should happen that his Congregation were disappointed of a more acceptable supply: However, *Sir*, I did not come undesir'd, and you took care (I thank you) that I should not go away unrequited. Few Ministers, who come with an honest design to do good to all, and hurt to none, ever met with the *Return* of such a Visit, as you were pleas'd to send to *Cripple-Gate*.

The next Accusation is, *That I said a Gentleman was an Atheist, and then deny'd it.* I confess I cannot give such an exact *Answer* to that as to the former, because that which passed was seven or eight years since. I might possibly tell the *Alderman*, that I suspected that Person to be an *Atheist*; but I am very confident I did not affirm that concerning him which I could not know. I will not say any thing to disoblige the *Alderman*, who hath been kind to me; but I will say, that if all that is said by way of Advice, should be published, and the worst Construction put upon it, the most wary Man might suffer for his good Will. I knew that this would be in your Paper before I saw it; for that Gentleman (as you call him) did declare before hand, that he would gather a Party, and go to the Observator, to do my Business (calling me *Rogue* and *Rascal*, and what he pleased) when, considering his Condition, it had been fitter for him to have express'd his Sense of a God, by the desire of all good Men's Prayers for him. I suppose you had some reason to think him *Atheistical*, when you saw him come to you with Death in his Face, and Mischief in his Heart.

My next Charge is, That when I reproved those that found fault with my relieving the *Poor*, &c. *I fell so bitterly upon Sir* R. F. that I set the whole Congregation a staring at him. If you could be set in a Convenient Place, I am sure the whole Congregation would stare at you for such a notorious Falshood. I hope your Informers did not tell you that I nam'd, or pointed at

at him; but it was the Construction which they made of what I said. Now Sir, (not to rake in the Ashes of the dead) I must tell you, that Sir *R. F.* was a Gentleman of far greater Quality than Interest in the Parish, and where his Magistracy was unconcern'd, he did not bear any great sway, nor was there ever any thing he did which displeas'd me concerning my distribution of Charity; but there were many others as much, or more concern'd than he was; so that whatever I said might as well cause staring at others as at him. I must likewise tell you, that in the same Sermon, I took occasion to reprove those that injur'd the Poor by mis-representing their Condition; and a great part of it had relation to the Case of the *French Protestants*, for whom I have likewise been concern'd; so that there was great occasion for staring that day. I wish you no other Punishment than to come into the Parish, and enquire of the Inhabitants when that remarkable day was, in which the whole Congregation (not consisting, by computation, of less than 4000 Persons) star'd at Sir *R. F.* that you might be soundly laught at for your pains. And as for Mr. *C.* whom you say, I serv'd *with the same sauce*: He is one who hath discover'd a very great prejudice against me, & sought by Reproaches & otherwise, to do me what hurt he can, but I could never by the strictest Enquiry, know what the occasion of it was. He once thought that I reflected upon him in a Sermon; whereupon I wrote to him, and protested by all that is Sacred, that I neither intended a Personal Reflection upon him, or any other; and if he doth not believe me, I cannot help it. I can *hold fast my Integrity*, when my Friends forsake me without a Cause: though, I thank God I have but little cause to complain of the want of Friendship.

But now comes the great Charge! You say, That my other Reprehension, mentioned in my Preface, was upon the Recorder and Mr. Deputy. O brave Observator! What is it that Malice will not invent, and you publish? As to the *Recorder*, 'tis true that I waited upon him several times, about the composing of some unhappy Differences in the Parish, but he was pleas'd to shew himself so much a Gentleman, and to express so much candor and sweetness of temper, that I think my self oblig'd to honour him all the dayes of my Life. You might with as much truth have said, that I intended to slander my own Father in his Grave.

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And as for the *Deputy*, I must tell you, that I am very strict in dating my Sermon-Notes, by which I know on what Day and Year I preacht any Sermon, and I find that I preacht that Sermon at *Cripple-Gate*, before the *Deputy* was made choice of, and I am sure I had at that time as true and unfeigned an esteem for him, as for any Citizen of *London*, as every one can testifie that ever heard me speak of him. I do exceedingly abhor a Personal reflection from the Pulpit. If I know of any particular Crime, I visit the Person, and with all the Meekness and Ingenuity that I am capable of, I tell him of it. But where I see there are Parties in that which is evil, and amongst Communicants; I think I could not discharge my *Duty*, especially in my monethly preparatory Sermons, if I should not shew them their *Danger*. If from general Reproofs or Admonitions guilty Men will be exasperated, I cannot help it, nor is it a Reason why I should desist from the discharge of my Duty.

You charge me this day of gathering somewhat out of the Books of *Carr*, *Curtis*, &c. I answer, That I never read them or to my knowledge ever saw them. That which you speak concerning *Newington-Green*, hath some truth in it, though but a little. You do not speak Truth very often, and therefore when you do, methinks you should speak the whole Truth. You should have left out the Condition, for I think none will be so silly as to believe that I said it, unless it were in merriment. And you should have added, that I would Christen the Child provided the Clark was present, and did assure me of the Ministers consent, and that he received as full satisfaction as if he had done it himself: This I can make appear to you is the truth of that case. I will at any time joyn issue with you concerning my interloping in the Parishes of other Ministers, if you will but except the case of visiting the Sick, about which I have been very much troubled, having heard that some Ministers have been offended at me, but it is a case so tender and compassionable, that I know not how to deny it to those that are my Auditors when no other Minister preaches; I do in that case as I would be done unto. I have often desir'd those that are sick to send for any Minister from another Parish, and have likewise earnestly desired those that send for me into other Parishes, to send for their own Minister. You tell me of my being actually present

ſent at the choice of *Common Council-Men*. I was ſo, but ſo unconcern'd, that I never ſpake to any one Man in the Pariſh about giving his Vote. I had one very near Kinſman in the Pariſh, who gave his Vote for thoſe that did not carry it; which I ſhould certainly have forbidden, if I had been ſo affected to the other Party as you affirm. You ſay likewiſe, that when the Conteſt was about Mr. *Dubois* and Mr. *Papillon*, I ſaid, *We are like to have ſad times, here are ſix honeſt Men laid aſide (whoſe Right it is) to make room for others to ſerve a turn*. I had thought to have taken no notice of this, becauſe if your Suppoſition of my being ill-affected were true, yet I am confident, no ſober Man can think that I could be ſuch an imprudent *Coxcomb* as to utter my ſelf after ſuch a manner in ſuch a great and publick Concern. Beſides, the account of it comes in ſtuttering, *Some body deliver'd himſelf to this effect*. In other places you are downright. But now you ſeem to grow weary of telling that which you accuſe me of. You tell me, Sir, of a Private Meeting where I Pray, Read, Catechiſe, *&c.* Which is juſt as true as all the reſt. 'Tis true, that there are ſome young Perſons that are my Morning-Auditors, who meet once a Month at a *Club*, and always give ſomewhat to the Poor, which I have had the diſpoſal of. They have made an Order amongſt themſelves, that no diſloyal Perſon ſhall come amongſt them, nor any but thoſe that are *Communicants*. But that I, or any *Clergyman* ever came amongſt them to Pray, Read, *&c.* or ever was one half-hour with them at their *Club*, is utterly falſe. I think I have taken notice of all the Paſſages, or moſt of them, by which you have moſt unworthily aſperſed me, and ſhould now conclude, but that I hear of more ſtuff, which your Factors have brought to you. I was this day told, that my Challenge of Chriſtening Children in other Pariſhes is taken, and that it can be proved where I did it without the Miniſters leave. I have throughly examin'd it, tho' I think it was two years ſince, and this is the whole of it: I baptiz'd a ſick Child for a poor man at ten of the Clock in the Night, when he could not find his own Miniſter, for which I did not take one Farthing, directly or indirectly: and in that caſe I might well ſuppoſe both the Miniſters leave and his thanks. But I hear another ten times worſe, and that is, that I Chriſten'd a Child at *Cripple-Gate*, where a conſiderable Citizen was preſent, and heard me baptize it without the Com-

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mon-Prayer-Book, and said, that I made an Exposition of my own. I Answer, That I commonly christen Children by heart; but if that Gentleman can prove that at that time, or any other, I ever varyed a Word from the Common-Prayer, or added one Syllable to it, I will be his Bond-slave; Another Story is, That I gave Money out of my stock of Charity to Child-Bed Women, that they may give to my Wife for performing the Office of a Mid-wife. It is just as true as if it were said, That I am now in *Newgate* for Robbery, and to be executed the next Sessions. If ever I should be guilty of any thing of that nature, I should expect a Curse to my self and my Posterity. I do very often in these cases, as it is sufficiently known, return what I have taken, and add to it besides; and I am sure that my Wife doth likewise give her Pains, and layes out many a Shilling for those poor Creatures. There is another Story concerning Ordinations, which it seems you are to tell me of, as appears by a Letter which came to me last Night from a *Papist* (as I may well suppose) in which he threatens to expose me for that, if I meddle with the *Observator*, and proffers to dispute with me, *whether it be best to be a Jew or a Popish Christian*; but as to that of Ordination, I will give no publick Reply to it, whatsoever my Reputation suffers, because I will not be dis-ingenuous to another, but I have and can satisfie any Person in private. It seems you have likewise gotten a *Worcestershire* story of a dead mans Bone by the end, concerning which I shall only say, that the Matter of Fact relating to it, hath astonished some very Wise and Learned Men, who would have done the same that I did. I understand that you intend to charge me of going to *Wizzards*, &c. and many other things which I may well expect, because Truth is so very scarce with you, that if you afford an Ounce of that, there must be a pound of Falshood mixt with it. And now that I have made this Reply, it is very advisable, that for time to come you hear both sides before you publish Calumnies; or else that you send out Bills, that if any malicious man hath a mind to murder the Reputation of an other, he may come to such a place, and the work shall be done before ever the Person injured knows of it. I shall now leave you to your Calling, and mind my own: I hope if you still proceed to reproach me, which I do expect, those that give any heed to you will come to me, and receive satisfaction, and I doubt not but I shall be able to give it.

Sept. 15th, 1684. Yours, *William Smythies.*

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